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SUBJECT: POLAND AND RUSSIA TO HOLD REGULAR SECURITY MEETINGS

Classified By: DCM Quanrud for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Poland and Russia have agreed to a regular dialogue to discuss a wide range of security issues, including the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, NATO-Russia relations, non-proliferation, and missile defense (MD). The decision occurred in the context of a December 19 meeting between Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Przemyslaw Grudzinski and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Ryabkov, that focused on missile defense-related transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs). According to Marek Szczygiel, Deputy Director of the MFA's Security Policy Department, Ryabkov accepted Grudzinski's invitation to travel to Warsaw to continue the dialogue in early spring. Szczygiel said the meetings would be inter-agency in structure, led by the two Deputy Foreign Ministers. He added that Warsaw had not yet developed a specific agenda for the spring meeting, but the Poles were prepared to address virtually all security issues. One exception was licensing of Soviet-era military equipment, which would remain the subject of a separate bilateral exchange with Moscow; the next meeting on this issue was tentatively scheduled for the second half of March in Warsaw.

¶2. (C) Szczygiel characterized the December 19 meeting on TCBMs as disappointing but not surprising, and the Poles came away from the meeting without agreement or progress on TCBMs. The Russian side presented a litany of familiar complaints about the proposed MD program in Europe, focusing on its alleged offensive capability and the likelihood that it would contribute to instability on the continent. The Russians also took aim at NATO, criticizing Alliance support for MD, as enunciated in December's NATO Foreign Ministers statement. According to Szczygiel, Ryabkov asserted that the U.S. intended to subvert NATO's own MD program by integrating it into the U.S. system rather than the stated goal of integrating the U.S. program into that of the Alliance. Thus, the U.S. would control all MD-related decision-making. Szczygiel emphasized that the Polish side interpreted Ryabkov's assertions as classic Russian attempts to create dissension within the Alliance.

¶3. (C) In general, Szczygiel said the Russians were not willing seriously to discuss TCBMs because that would connote acceptance of MD deployment in central Europe. The Poles believe Russia still hopes to block MD deployment and/or that the incoming US Administration will delay or cancel the program. Szczygiel noted positively, however, that the Russians seemed willing to continue a regular security dialogue, to include MD-related discussions, even if deployment proceeds as currently planned.

¶4. (C) Looking ahead, Szczygiel said the Poles were

disappointed that the Russian side was not willing to consider reciprocity as part of a TCBM package. Ryabkov dismissed Polish (and Czech) insistence on inspecting Russian facilities as "unreasonable." Szczygiel emphasized that Warsaw was open to a Russian presence in Poland but would continue to insist on the "reciprocity rule" since anything less would be hard to accept politically. He added that the Polish side had offered to limit its right of inspection to facilities in Kaliningrad, but the Russians were not prepared to discuss the issue. In spite of Russian stonewalling on TCBMs, the Polish impression was that the session in Moscow had been useful, especially the agreement to establish a regular bilateral security dialogue. Tangible progress on TCBMs and other difficult security issues will have to wait until at least the next round in Warsaw.

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